

Message Text

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15

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2475

EO 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

1. ALL KOREAN PAPERS EVENING OF APRIL 11 AND MORNING APRIL 12 CARRIED PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH TO CONGRESS AS TOP STORY WITH HEADLINES EMPHASIZING PRESIDENT'S REAFFIRMATION OF US-KOREAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP.

2. THUS FAR LIMITED EDITORIAL COMMENT WELCOMES PRESIDENT'S REASSURANCES TO ALLIES BUT QUESTIONS WHETHER CONGRESS WILL PERMIT USG TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS. CHOSON ILBO COMMENTS THAT PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL AID FOR VIETNAM UNLIKELY TO BE APPROVED IN CONGRESS AND MAY THEREFORE IN FACT BE LITTLE MORE THAN FORMALITY TO INDICATE USG TRIED TO DO ITS BEST. GOVERNMENT'S ENGLISH-LANGUAGE KOREA HERALD SAID ".....IT IS SAD THAT REAFFIRMATION OF SECURITY COMMITMENT STILL LEAVES ASIAN ANXIETY" IN VIEW OF CONGRESSIONAL MOVES TO ERODE THAT COMMITMENT. HANKUK ILBO OPTIMISTIC ON US-KOREA SECURITY RELATIONSHIP, DECLARING THAT DESPITE INTERNAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN US, "IT APPEARS THAT US MILITARY POLICY, WHICH VIEWS KOREA AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS, WILL NOT ABANDON KOREA FOR A LONG TIME TO COME." ENGLISH-LANGUAGE KOREA TIMES, SAYING US SEEMS TO BE MAKING
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DECISIVE MOVE TO RESTORE ALLIES' CONFIDENCE, CALLS ON

CONGRESS TO REASSESS US ASIAN POLICY BASED ON "HARSH REALITY"
AND ON US TO DO "SOMETHING DRASTIC" TO CHANGE ITS POLICY IF
NIXON DOCTRINE PROVES DETRIMENTAL. RECALLING THAT KOREAN
WAR FOLLOWED US DECISION TO EXCLUDE KOREA FROM ITS DEFENSE
PERIMETER, TIMES CONCLUDES BY CAUTIONING THAT AMERICANS SHOULD
NOT RELY ON VAGUE HOPE FOR PEACE.

3. COMMENT: PRIVATELY, KOREAN CONTACTS HAVE BEEN CIRCUMSPECT
ABOUT SPEECH, INDICATING APPRECIATION FOR PRESIDENT'S REMARKS
ABOUT KOREA BUT STILL SUGGESTING THAT REAL TEST OF RELIABILITY
OF US COMMITMENT WILL BE OUR ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO SOUTHEAST
ASIA. KOREANS REMAIN HAUNTED BY FEAR THAT KOREA WILL FACE
SAME PROBLEMS NOW FACED BY VIETNAM, WITH USG UNABLE TO FULFILL
COMMITMENTS IF NORTH KOREAN ATTACK TAKES PLACE. WE ARE
ARGUING STRONGLY AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY AGAINST THIS FEAR,
POINTING UP DIFFERENT US ROLE AND COMMITMENT IN KOREA,
BUT ALSO STRESSING HEAVILY KOREAN NEED TO TAKE MUCH MORE
ACCOUNT OF US PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES.
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